

THE PARENTS' UNION SCHOOL BOOKS, WHICH ARE FOUND HELPFUL, AND BOOKS SUPPLEMENTING THOSE IN THE PROGRAMME.

FROM NOTES SENT BY R. A. PENNETHORNE.

1. Free or public library tickets.
2. Greater use of the Bible, to give further knowledge of facts of life.
3. Geography. "Peeps into Other Lands" series; "Things Seen in Other Lands"; "Changing China"; "Motoring in the Balkans"; "Hungary as it is"; "In Locustland."
4. French History from Louis XI to Henri IV.; "French Revolution," by H. Belloc.
5. Reading. A poem, self-selected, to be prepared and read aloud once a week, and the class to vote for best choice and best reading.
6. Writing. More time required; present writing too slow; boys must write quickly and well.

These notes, sent by Miss Pennethorne, were followed by discussion.

I. Owing to the parent's fear of infection the use of free libraries is not always possible.

II. Teaching in morality is to be drawn from the Bible, History, Plutarch, and Ourselves. "How we are Born," by Mrs. W. J., was highly recommended (publisher: C. W. Daniel). It was agreed that the Scripture time was too short, half an hour at least being needed, especially in examinations.

III. Ambleside Geography Book II. requires amplifying. In Class III. too much work is set, so extracts only from additional books set should be read to the pupil.

At this point the resolution was passed that a list of helpful books for each term's work should appear in the PIANTA.

The great danger was mentioned of the tendency for a teacher, well up in some particular subject, to pour out in her enthusiasm more than the child can grasp.

Cambridge County History Series is helpful in studying local geography.

THE ROYAL DRAWING SOCIETY'S METHODS OF ART TRAINING, BLACK-BOARD DRAWING, AND ORIGINAL ILLUSTRATION.

By M. EVANS.

At the present day, thanks to the Royal Drawing Society, there is not much chance of a child's talent in the art of drawing being overlooked. Mr. Ablett explains this particular art as "the universal language capable of describing all that is visible and tangible in the world, and even the visualisation called up by impressions on the *senses*." His method of fostering this particular art in children is "to develop in the child the power of mentally picturing what he sees and his skill in reproducing it with pencil or brush."

The baby of two, in the twentieth century, has a chance of exhibiting his talent. I have brought with me to-day some little drawings which I copied from the works exhibited at the R.D.S. annual April show at Fishmonger's Hall. In these "golden times" baby's drawings are not gathered up as waste paper and thrown into the fire, as they were 25 years ago, but they are carefully collected and sorted by the ambitious mother and father, and sent up to the R.D.S. for criticism. I ask you to notice the power of observation shown by the child of 2 years. "My auntie" has two arms, two legs, and two eyes and a nose placed in the correct portions of her body (the little artist has not been able to extend her talent as far as a mouth). "Peter rabbit" has the right number of ears and legs, and the soft body of the animal is well described.

The artist of 3 has noticed the revolving wheels of the steam engine and the rushing back of the smoke; there is a real feeling of movement about the drawing. The artist of 4 has noticed the lurching of a sailing boat, or perhaps he has experienced the *sensation*. Notice how the sails are filled with wind, and how the appearance of water is expressed by a few bold lines.

The artist of 5 has evidently studied the present fashions; the hobble skirt almost vies with a *Punch* drawing, and the saucepan toque is admirably suggested. I do not suppose these children are in any way specially talented, but they are having—fortunate little beings—what talent they possess encouraged from the very beginning, and these little drawings show that young children have *real* power to invent means of describing their own observations of appearances. A little child has described this art of visualisation very aptly: "You have to think of something, and draw a line round your think."

Too many parents make the mistake of thinking of an art training for their children as a special subject, an "extra," looking for ultimate results in this art as of professional use alone. This is all very well; but, on the other hand, why not give every child a chance of accurate thinking and observation, which he or she will find of infinite use in whatever sphere of work is taken up in after life. This power of visualisation is much encouraged in the Parents' Union School. Through the "picture talk" lessons the child is taught to reproduce as accurately as possible, as a mental picture, the work of art he has been examining; and the child who has been thoroughly taught to "look" will be the man or woman who will derive the most pleasure out of life later on. I mean, of course, by pleasure, the power of enjoying and appreciating the beautiful things, both natural and artificial, to be seen in the world.

The Royal Drawing Society has given children a chance of exhibiting their extraordinary quickness of sight and vivid

visualising powers by *drawings*. It encourages them to be themselves, and not to try and be somebody else; it teaches them to have confidence in themselves and to draw on hidden resources; it trusts in their intuition. To quote from Dr. Bather, when speaking at the meeting of the R.D.S. at the Guildhall last January: "We must bring out from the child's mind the qualities with which it is endowed, rather than to force into it material which it cannot assimilate. We who are now grown up remember not so much the things we were taught as those we found out for ourselves." Children ought to draw what they see, and not what they are told they ought to see. They are so fearless. We adults, who feel shy of drawing "movement" because of its great difficulty, are appalled at the audacity of our pupils, who will attack the movement of limbs or the movement of some inanimate object with perfect confidence in their own powers to represent the same. Movement explains mechanism, and mechanism always interests a child.

This fostering of the *power of visualisation* is the chief point in my paper, because I feel it is the most original and attractive side of the R.D.S.'s methods. In every modern school, not excluding the Council Schools, all sides of art training are thought about—brush drawing, drawing from the life, illustrating, sketching, designing, perspective, still life studies; but I do not think this power of visualisation, or snap-shot drawing, as Mr. Ablett sometimes calls it, is sufficiently considered. This mental picturing can be wonderfully useful to the individual. It is extraordinary how blurred our conceptions are directly the familiar object is no more before us. Curiously enough, the day I was working at this subject I happened to notice an article in the *Daily Mirror* on the "lack of observation," most probably much exaggerated, as all *Daily Mirror* articles are likely to be, but with a sub-stratum of truth running through it. I will read an extract:—

"The average person is remarkably unobservant. The

question, 'Where are the cow's ears?' was recently put to the Senators of the American State of Ohio, and puzzled them all for an answer. Investigation in *this* country revealed the same lack of the observing faculty. Here are some typical replies: 'I think the ears and horns are on a level'; 'I think the ears are before the horns'; 'I think the ears are just at the side of the horns'; 'I think the ears are behind the horns'; 'I think the ears are underneath the horns'; 'I have not noticed cows' ears.'"

Now of course these answers seem ridiculous to you as students of nature; but all the same, I know for myself I often find I am extremely ignorant about things which I see, but apparently do not visualise, nearly every day of my life. I am afraid I am treading on very familiar ground for those who are interested in scouting. Scouts, of course, have their power of visualisation very much encouraged.

This power of snap-shot drawing is of enormous help to the teacher; to visualise a striking fact in history and draw it roughly and rapidly on the board will often give the child a very living idea of the incident to be remembered. The arrangement of troops in a battle is a dull fact to read to a child, but it can be made of thrilling interest when dramatically drawn on the blackboard.

A child will perhaps learn more quickly the shape of a country, or the position of certain mountains and rivers, from a quick memory map on the blackboard, than a five minutes' perusal of the same from his own atlas. Your memory sketch inspires him with confidence, and he wishes to try and do the same. General Baden-Powell lays such stress on this power of producing a rapid and yet clear sketch map. He tells the story of a Boer, so *uneducated* that he could not write his own name, who drew with a stump of lead pencil on a piece of packing paper, a rough sketch of the enemy's position, so accurately that the general gave him five pounds for it. This sketch should be made, of course, from memory. Then, again, in teaching a poem to

your small pupils it is a great help if you draw for them on the blackboard the chief incidents of the poem. The piece of poetry then becomes a series of mental pictures veiled in beautiful words.

I have now *tried* to explain what I personally feel to be the characteristic point in Mr. Ablett's method of teaching drawing; but I cannot pass the *Red Book*.

For a certain fee, £1 1s. a year, a book is supplied to the member, which contains the ordinary drawing paper, and an envelope in which to put the child's drawings. A few words should be written on the drawings, to say whether the drawing is from nature, recollection of nature, or imagination. Any drawing thought worthy of criticism is put into the envelope by the mother or teacher—drawings executed by the child in his play-time and left about by him, and also the "snap-shot" drawings, or pictorial impressions, derived directly from nature.

The red book is sent to Mr. Ablett for criticism *three times* a year, and he makes a selection from the drawings, has them mounted on the empty sheet of the book, and has his remarks on the same typed at the beginning. He also selects drawings, when desirable, for the Royal Drawing Society's exhibition, which is held in April.

The main object of the Red Book, I gather, is to discover and encourage the *child artist*.

It will always be found an asset for a teacher to hold the R.D.S. teaching certificate, and this is obtained by successfully passing an examination on object drawing, shading from the coloured object, portrait from memory, figure from the draped model, painting in water colours, attending a course of lectures on the theory of drawing and answering questions on the same, and giving a specimen drawing lesson to a class of children.

This *course for teachers* is held three times a year, and the next course begins on Monday, April 24th. Those students who pass some of the examinations can enter for

the remaining examination at another course; the total fee is £3 9s. I have known several clever art teachers who have thought it worth while to join these courses and gain the R.D.S. certificate, as the membership has proved a valuable asset in their teaching career. It is rather nice to feel that not only "specialists" but good "all round" teachers have every opportunity, if they have some talent in this direction, of gaining the *certificate*, and I am sure the week's study in London must be most enjoyable.

To appreciate fully the work done by the R.D.S., a visit should be made to the exhibition now on at the Fishmonger's Hall, London Bridge, where drawings by clever draughtsmen aged from 2 to 19 can be seen and enjoyed.

DISCUSSION ON DRAWING (ROYAL DRAWING SOCIETY).

The following points arose from a short discussion after the paper had been read.

Mr. Ablett's address is 50, Queen Anne's Gate, Westminster, S.W.

He allows any medium to be used during the art lessons—pencil, chalk, paint, etc.

He always lays great stress on memory work. The pupils *look* at the object (flower or fruit, etc.) to be painted or drawn, and then it is taken away, and they do it from memory.

He is in favour of original illustrations.

If we wish to teach on Mr. Ablett's system entirely we must have a certificate to be gained after a course taken under him. It is possible to take the course and the examination in one week, arranged to fit in with the holidays, *i.e.*, in January, April, or September.

COMPOSITION, LETTERWRITING, AND NARRATION.

By H. H. DYKE.

There is a picture which we all know well, we call it our "Creed," and when we were students at Scale How, its details were impressed on our memory. I mean, of course, "The Descent of the Holy Spirit," in the Church of Santa Maria Novella at Florence. Has it ever occurred to you that of the seven Liberal Arts, which are represented in this picture and which we learnt at Scale How to acknowledge as inspired by God—of these seven, no less than three go to form the subject of our discussion this morning? Had I realised, when I agreed to write a paper on Composition, that I was presuming to offer my opinion upon so great a subject as the famous "Trivium" itself, I should have undertaken it less lightly.

Not long ago I asked an English mistress at one of our chief public schools for girls if she could give me any suggestions with regard to the teaching of Composition. Her answer might have come from any Scale How student: "I should put first," she said, "the importance of oral composition with young children. Half the trouble we have with older girls would be spared, if they had learnt as children to narrate connectedly, and without help by questioning, stories which had first been read to them."

It is hardly necessary to insist at such a meeting as this upon the importance of narration, because this is one of our first educational principles, and all of us who have taught little children must have experienced astonishment and delight at the power such a method of teaching has in training the mind and in giving command of language.

To pass on to the consideration of written Composition. The authority whom I quoted before continued: "The next point is, 'No bricks without straw.' Subjects only should be set in which the children are really interested. The use